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Over a period of two years, a dramatic transformation has occurred in the learning climate of the school. The tension and hostility, present in many of the classes observed in 1961, have largely disappeared. With a minimum of structural changes, the physical facilities have been greatly improved. Bright colors, large bulletin boards, and displays of art work and photography have improved the general appearance. The library has been relocated and a multipurpose cafeteria auditorium added.

Teacher-morale has risen appreciably, as the developing program has challenged and provided an avenue for creativity and professional growth. Many Negro teachers have been added to the staff so that it it more balanced racially, and ten full-time specialists have made the load of the classroom teacher much easier. Student attitudes have also greatly improved. Increased individual attention and a more creative teacher-approach, in addition to increased responsibility and a sense of participation in the effort to improve Madison Junior High, have contributed to a real sense of involvement on the part of the students.

There is still much to be done, however. The play area adjacent to the school needs to be greatly enlarged. The problem of orderly conduct will continue to be critical until the music room, the library, the gym, the cafeteria, corridors, and classrooms are accoustically recreated. However, the visiting team which developed the original survey in 1961 is impressed especially with the progress made in the last few months, and is confident the present rate and direction of change will continue.

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FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS OF MADISON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

June 1, 1963

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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School of Education
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York

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A FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS OF THE MADISON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

This report is based upon several visits to the Madison Junior High School, talks with teachers and various leadership personnel in the school, interviews with several small groups of students, and observation of some classes. One phase of the observation included a visit by a group of undergraduate students in education at Syracuse University, with careful preparatory and follow-up discussions. A sampling of their reactions is included in this report.

I. Climate of the School

The change in the climate of the school is readily apparent to members of the study team who observed at Madison Junior High School two years ago. There has been a dramatic transformation, resulting in a pervasive brightness and cheerfulness in classrooms, offices, and corridors. A comfortable working atmosphere is found in most classes. The tension and hostility which were present in many of the classes two years ago seem largely to have disappeared. Yet the school has not become passive in the process. There is a high level of activity and noticeable spontaneity on the part of pupils. Teachers obviously share with students a general feeling of pride in the school. The student observers from the University used as a reference point for comparison the suburban schools in which they had been working. They too commented on the activity and spontaneity of the students in the Madison Junior High School, and the amount of freedom permitted students by teachers. They felt that teachers were taking advantage of this freedom to further learning on the part of pupils.

II. Physical Facilities

With a minimum of structural changes, the physical facilities at Madison have been improved tremendously. Much of the change has been

effected by the introduction of bright colors, large bulletin boards, and displays of artwork and photography. In addition, new classroom furniture and improved furniture in such places as the faculty room have made a difference in the general appearance of the school. The relocation of the library, as well as the new furniture in it, have been a great improvement. The multi-purpose cafeteria-auditorium seems to have been a useful redeployment of space which is well handled and well used. The addition of student lockers does not increase the visual attractiveness but has apparently been helpful for student morale and improved neatness and order. Although the library is small, it is much improved over the former facility of two years ago. More books are needed in the library, as well as magazines and other research materials.

The play area about the school has not been enlarged. Since certain adjacent property can be acquired to provide a minimum of play space, it is unthinkable that the present outdoor facilities should continue. This additional space should be provided at once unless the school is to be relocated as recommended in the report two years ago.

The accoustical treatment of the music room, the library, the gym, cafeteria, corridors, and classrooms has been postponed. This is most unfortunate and makes the best environment for learning and other student activities impossible. Until these corrections to control noise are made, the problem of orderly control will continue to be critical.

III. Teachers

Most of the observers commented on the alert and enthusiastic feelings expressed by the teachers. They felt that the teachers' interest and challenge stemming from a developing program have been reflected in a more professional attitude and the extension of effort along new lines of teaching and learning.

The marked increase in numbers of negro teachers is most commendable. This trend needs to be continued until the staff is fairly well balanced racially. The addition of approximately ten positions to the faculty, including most of the specialists recommended two years ago, has made the load of the classroom teacher infinitely easier to carry.

We found evidence that faculty morale is relatively high, and certainly better than that found in the initial study. There seems to be a growing sense of commitment to do a professional job; on the other hand, the faculty still has a long way to go in learning how to do the job completely and effectively. We have some reservations about certain emphases that we saw in both content and methodology; yet progress has been notable, and the process of development seems to be well underway. Careful evaluation of the work in each classroom by skillful administrative and supervisory members, working with the teachers, is most essential.

IV. Student Attitudes

One of the University staff members requested the opportunity to visit with several groups of Madison Junior High School students. Two groups of four or five each spent 45 minutes with the interviewer discussing the school as it is perceived today by the students, with particular reference to changes that they have seen take place in the last two years. Some rather exciting responses were evoked in these interviews. These comments which follow are almost verbatim and truly represent the spirit and attitudes of these students.

"We have more activities in the school than we had two years ago. We even have dances which the kids enjoy very much. More clubs and visits to many places outside the school are other things which we didn't have a couple of years ago."

"Many of the teachers seem different. They don't seem to expect you to know everything when you come into their classes before you even study

anything. Now they help you if you have any problems and treat you as though every person is different from everyone else. They don't cram the same things down your throats."

"We are all proud of our school. We think improvements around the school are very good - like the auditorium-cafeteria, the new library, the lockers, and we think our student council is doing a good job."

"We still need better equipment in the home economics rooms and in the gymnasium. Much of this equipment is very old and worn out. We hope we can get better equipment in these places."

V. Team Teaching and In-Service Education

One of the approaches used for the improvement of instruction has been the organization of some teachers into working teams who plan together and share their experiences. This is not yet a full-fledged team teaching experiment in the current use of that term, but it has been a useful device to help teachers think through what they are doing, plan for what they are doing, and evaluate the results. It has helped to vitalize classroom experiences for many students, and to make teaching a shared enterprise for a number of the teachers.

VI. Clinical Work in Reading

Special notice should be given to the contributions of the work in the development of reading skills. The two reading specialists are working with individuals, small groups, and in teaching teams. The progress they have made is reflected in the improved achievement of a number of students, a spread of motivation among pupils, and certain methodological improvements among teachers who consult with the specialists. This has been and continues to be an important area of achievement and improvement.

VII. Administration

After a slow start, the central administration and the board of education are to be highly commended for proceeding with the implementation of the survey report of 1961.

Attention has been given to the administration of the Madison Junior High School, with particular attention to the organization, staffing, coordinating, and budgeting to the best interests of the pupils served.

Up to this point the Madison Junior High School has been the focal point of attack. Now there remains the opportunity to extend the concepts and the overall design to other schools, and to bring all schools in the city to the point where there are no distinctions drawn between the Madison Area Schools and others in the school system.

The director of the Madison Area Project has demonstrated his leadership in choosing and enlarging the staff of the Madison Junior High School, in working with the faculty and central administration as well as with community leaders, and in promoting curriculum reorganization and in-service education programs. The improvement in the program since his appointment are evidences of his leadership in releasing the energies and talents of the Madison Junior High School staff.

VIII. Special Commendations

There are a number of other areas that inspire positive comments. The art program has been a spectacular development. The extremely high quality of the art displayed might lead to some suspicion that concentration is on a few talented pupils. A visit to the art classes immediately corrects such possible suspicions. Art is taught creatively. Many pupils are producing imaginative work, and the general quality of both teaching and production is excellent.

The audiovisual services have provided some special features in the program which are both obvious and subtle. Photographic displays on bulletin boards reflect and enhance the changed atmosphere of the school. But this is more than mere display. Excellent photographs of children engaged in positive activities reinforce the effort to do positive things. As a technique for the improvement of the self concept, this is a very interesting

approach. Also in this area is the development of an audiovisual club with students taking responsibility for helping teachers in the use of aids.

Volunteer work is developing as an important phase of the program; volunteers from the community and the University are providing help with typing, clerical work, tutoring, extracurricular activities, etc. This program brings extra hands and extra talent to the school. It further enhances the concept of an open school and open classroom. During the course of one of the interviewers' visits to the school, he had an opportunity to share a team-teaching planning session with three or four of the Madison staff, as well as two volunteer students from the University. A dramatic incident wound up this session when the two student volunteers from the University asked if it would be possible for them to do their student teaching at Madison two years hence. They commented upon their fine experiences as student volunteers and felt that they could learn more about teaching and learning from the Madison School than any other place in the city. This perception is evidence of remarkable change.

Community relations have improved rapidly with some definite programs for parents. The home-shcool ties have been improved, and the willingness of parents to approach teachers and administrators with their problems, confident that they will get a hearing, represents real progress. There should be a greater variety of adult study sessions in the evening, or even on weekends, to meet parental interests and needs.

IX. Recommendations for the Future

There remain certain important aspects of administration and supervision which call for more careful study and handling. These include:
(a) more flexibility in educational programs, resulting from the central administrative and supervisory staff of the city school system allowance for freedom of action in meeting curricular, disciplinary and activity needs

of the pupils in the Madison Junior High School. (b) Further communication at all levels, especially between the principal's office and the classroom, to the end that there is assurance of full, frank, and free exchange of information, ideas, and suggestions on educational improvement and efficiency of operation. The absence of any suggestion of coercion coupled with direct and forthright responses of cooperation are conducive to high morale. (c) Continued search for staff who envision special opportunities to do a distinctive job of professional quality in the Madison Area schools. (d) Continued choice of qualified staff with a view to further integration of the faculty along racial lines. (e) More effective utilization by classroom teachers of the rich resources provided through Madison Area Project staff workers. At this point there is need for more careful delineation of roles and responsibilities, and more adequate communication among all concerned. (f) Development of ways and means of helping to assure financial rewards for the staff without the feeling that one is merely doing extra jobs for extra pay; the feeling should be that teachers in the Madison Junior High School are doing extra professional tasks to help assure the success of a very difficult and vital operation. Upon this operation the welfare of many youths may well depend, and from it we may draw lessons and insights for tackling one of the most perplexing aspects of American education in hundreds of urban centers over the nation. (g) Continued informal relationships in a permissive environment for teaching, but with a growing atmosphere of dignified professional pride that begets mutual respect and trust among all members of the team. (h) There are overtones of concern among the staff over a seeming tendency on the part of the board of education or the central office to hedge or cut back on funds for supplies, equipment, and certain structural needs in the plant. This should be avoided. If allowed to grow, this perception may aim a shattering blow at the present high morale of the staff. (i) The coordination of curriculum and instruction is a difficult and long range job. Much has been done in a

relatively short time under the current leadership. Teachers are being encouraged and helped to do their work in more creditable fashion. Caution must be taken lest the initial flush of enthusiasm wears off and that certain procedures and practices become routine to the point where they lose their vitality for teachers and students. This can only be done through continuing in-service education and consultant help p for the teachers in the school.

X. Conclusion

All of these comments have stressed the evidence of progress at Madison Junior High School. There is still a long way to go before it becomes the school which it can be. Clearly, the present direction is promising and the present leadership should be encouraged to continue the work which has been initiated. The visiting team which developed the original survey of 1961 is impressed especially with the progress made in the last few months at the school and is confident the present rate and direction of change will continue.